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## ABSTRACT

Noting that learning to read and learning to write are closely linked, this paper asks why there are sometimes readers who cannot write and writers who cannot read. The paper advocates taking a closer look at the reading and writing relationship to answer the question and provide strategies for competent literacy instruction in all areas. It reviews the literature for effective literacy practices and finds that the work of Pike, Compain, and Mumper (1994) presents an in-depth understanding of the reading-writing relationship by defining specific attributes common to both and addressing the two processes in an integrated manner rather than as isolated subjects. It also cites several other helpful studies. (NKA)

# Readers That Can't Write . . . Writers That Can't Read

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## Introduction

The most superficial examination of many language arts curriculum proudly states that good readers make good writers and good writers make good readers. Learning to read and learning to write are closely linked. Knowledge in one is often transferable to the other. Reading and writing exist only in relation to each other. The two acts are one act, and all teachers need to do is make use of this simple truth in developing the skills of their students. (Norberg, 1996).

In a third grade classroom, a young student fills pages of journal books with comprehensible story material. However, this student's reading assessment places her in the lowest group. In another classroom a sixth grader, who has above grade level reading competency, struggles to put words on paper for a book report, and labors equally with creative writing assignments and journal work. These scenarios are not isolated cases in our public school classrooms.

## Statement of the Problem

Why are there readers that can't write and writers that can't read? Unfortunately, this is a fact that a society striving for literacy cannot ignore. A closer look must be given to the reading and writing relationship in order to answer this question and provide strategies for competent literacy instruction in all areas.

## Review of the Literature

A closer look at the research and development of a language arts curriculum offers many theories on teaching reading and writing. The following are instructional guidelines for the teaching of reading and writing found in Norberg's handout. In the area of reading, specifically, the fluent reader, grades 2-4, it is suggested to: read aloud a variety of texts, provide time for independent reading, model different strategies such as the concepts of into, through, beyond, provide quality core literature and expository material, facilitate literature group discussions, demonstrate how to get information from expository text, and provide time to share writing, for example, establishing an author's chair. The teaching emphases for the developing writer, grades 2-3 are: model writing, define authentic purpose; teach steps in writing process such as focus on the topic, prewrite, drafting, response, revision, editing, publishing; teach spelling strategies; teach use of punctuation, correct grammar and usage, awareness of writing voice, maintain portfolios, and read and discuss good literature and informational

text as models for writing.

Another source for effective literacy practices reflects similar strategies for the teaching of reading and writing (Dillon, 2000). These recommendations include: reading aloud, exposure to good literature, teaching reading and writing as a process, teach skills in context of whole meaningful literature, teacher model writing, teach grammar and mechanics in context, write for real audience and across curriculum, and write before and after reading.

Reading and writing appear to be systematically related. Studies have shown positive aspects of the reading and writing relationship. Better writers are better readers, and better readers tend to produce better quality writing. Although research reveals a positive correlation between reading and writing there are some exceptions. Since teaching activities of reading and writing are often in isolation students may be taught an unbalanced approach, achieving more or less from either discipline. Good readers can be poor writers, and good writers can be poor readers as a result of a fragmented language arts program (Pike, Compain, and Mumper, 1994) . Recognizing that reading and writing need to be taught as an interactive process, the authors looked closely at the similarities between reading and writing. Both reading and writing are a cognitive and linguistic constructing or reconstructing of information. The reader reconstructs meaning from print, the writer constructs meaning using print. For the reader, meaning is created by background knowledge and author information and for the writer meaning is constructed from ones own knowledge. Both reading and writing are comparable thought processes, and place similar demands on thinking. Before reading, one prepares by activating prior knowledge; before writing one establishes purpose based on prior knowledge. Both processes are reflective. As the relationship between reading and writing becomes clearer, certain activities can foster growth in each. The reading process can enhance the writing process. As children experience various forms of text structure, they gain an understanding of how texts work and are organized. Literature provides examples of beginnings and endings, voice and organization, literary techniques, genres, and models. The more readers interact with what they are reading, the better they do while writing. (Pike, Compain, & Mumper, 1994).

Reading is also an indispensable part of the writing process, because it can be used throughout the writing process. The following table is a good example of reading opportunities that can be fostered at

stages of the writing process. (Pike, Compain, & Mumper, 1994):

Stages of the Writing Process

Reading Opportunities

Prewriting	gathering information for topic -information books -pattern books -newspapers -primary sources (journals, memoirs, diaries) semantic mapping note taking rereading notes
Drafting	reading piece silently while writing rereading aloud to self, peers, teacher rereading to regain momentum researching for more information referring to word lists, reference books
Revising	rereading silently to evaluate piece reading piece aloud in peer or teacher conference reading piece in Authors's Circle
Editing	reading piece to check for spelling, mechanics, grammar reading word lists, dictionaries, to obtain spelling of words reading classmates/s piece to proofread
Sharing/Publishing	reading piece in Authors' Circle reading piece to others audiences

In turn, writing teaches children about reading. (Pike, Compain, & Mumper, 1994). Writing involves reading, and helps reinforce and develop the reading skills of phonics, vocabulary and comprehension. Using writing in reading gives students a personal context in which to learn these skills and strategies. Writing can be incorporated into all phases

of reading.

An important piece of research published in 1986 gives more insight into the reading and writing relationship. (Shannahan & Lomax, 1986). This study compared and evaluated three alternative theoretical models of reading and writing. Previous research failed to treat reading and writing as an interrelated process, looking only at isolated components and basing results on gross generalizations, establishing the relationship of reading and writing but neglecting to explain what was transferable between the two disciplines. The three models that Shannahan and Lomax examined were; an interactive model, a reading-writing model and writing-reading model. The interactive is the most complex and postulates that reading can influence writing, and writing influence reading. The components used in the reading portion were word analysis, knowledge of vocabulary, and text comprehension. The variables used in the writing model were spelling, vocabulary, syntax, and story structure. The importance of the interactive model is the nature of the relationship across the reading and writing dimensions.

The second model theorized that reading knowledge can influence writing but no writing knowledge would be useful in reading; the influence is one directional. The third model, writing-reading, includes similar components to models one and two, however with the assumption that writing is expected to affect reading, but not the reverse. This model characterizes the general order of development rather than the relationship of variables in both. The conclusion of this study finds the interactive model as providing the greater level of cross influences between reading and writing. The reading-to-writing model was superior to the writing-to-reading model, suggesting that more reading information is used in writing than vice-versa. The fact that the writing-to-reading model is the least exemplary suggests that the learning that accrues from writing can be generalized to reading only if the writing competency is somewhat commensurate with the reading ability.

A more concrete application of the previous study is shown in Shanahan's (1988) research which identified seven instructional principles for relating reading and writing:

1. Teachers provide daily opportunities for students to read literature and write in response to their reading.
2. Teachers introduce reading and writing in kindergarten and provide opportunities for students to read and write for genuine purposes.

3. Teachers understand that student reading and writing reflect the developmental nature of the reading and writing relationship.
4. Teachers make the reading-writing connection explicit to students by providing opportunities for them to share their writing with classmates, publish their own books, and learn about authors.
5. Teachers emphasize that the quality of the reading and writing products students produce depends on the processes they have used. For example, as students reread and talk about literature they clarify interpretations, and they revise their writing to communicate more effectively.
6. Teachers emphasize the communicative functions of reading and writing and involve students in reading and writing for genuine communication purposes.
7. Teachers teach reading and writing in meaningful contexts with literature.

### Summary

An overview of the research and perspectives presented in this paper begins with a presentation of effective literary practices. The ETF English and Language Arts Handbook and the Dillon text list methods and applications for the independent teaching of reading and writing. Very little attention is given to relating reading techniques to writing methods, or vice versa. These strategies are presented as separate, and how they are related is ambiguous. Pike, Compain, and Mumper (1994) present a more in depth understanding of the reading-writing relationship by defining specific attributes common to both. They conclude that not only are reading and writing related but can both be enhanced by addressing the two processes in an integrated manner rather than as isolated subjects. The clinical research of the Shanahan and Lomax study (1986) showed that the interactive model of reading and writing fosters better overall success in both disciplines, with the reading-writing model as second most effective and the writing-reading model least. This research supports the more general assumptions of the reading-writing relationship discussed by Pike, Compain, and Mumper (1994). Further studies by Shanahan (1988) give

concrete, integrated methods and instructional principles for relating reading and writing.

### Implications

Reading and writing are two modes of language and are inextricably related. In particular reading and writing are not independent but rather an interdependent pair. However, for the teacher of language arts it is not enough to assume this simple truth. By noting the weakness in the methods of teaching reading and writing, that is, the lack of integration of the two, one can see why some good readers can't write, and some good writers can't read. Usual instructional approaches to both reading and writing may be effective independently, but fail to utilize the components, common to both, that can enhance both. One cannot assume that teaching reading and writing in separate, albeit effectively proven methods is enough. A knowledge of the developmental processes of reading and writing is critical but only the beginning. A closer look at the similarities and differences of both, that can effectively be taught in a true integrated fashion is paramount to creating a literate society where good readers can write well, and good writers can read.



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